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# “CHRISTIANITY & ‘THE CLARION’”

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The “Clarion”—some may need the explanation—is a newspaper, founded and edited by Mr Robert Blatchford, whose nom-de-plume “Nunquam” has been widely-known these many years. Its aim is the popularisation of communism. The “Clarion” undoubtedly takes front rank among Socialistic organs. It has not concerned itself greatly with economics, but by means of humanitarian pleadings has won a hearing for Socialism amongst many who would never have been touched by mere theoretical Socialism. The paper has always been bright and readable, and by thousands of readers, its weekly advent is eagerly expected. Mr Blatchford is a journalist of consummate ability and his books, especially “Merry England” and “Britain for the British,” have had an enormous circulation. More than this, he is a man of high character and aims. It is therefore a matter of serious moment that in such a paper and from such a pen articles are appearing subversive of the Christian religion. On the 23rd of January, Mr Blatchford introduced his readers to a sixpenny edition of a work by a German scientist, called “The Riddle of the Universe,” with the remark: This book demolishes the entire structure upon which the religions of the world are built. There is no escape from that conclusion. The case for science is complete.” Correspondence flowed in upon him, and Mr Blatchford commenced in reply a series of articles, seriously headed, but all denying the essentials of the Christian faith. It is to those articles that I want to refer.

My own position ought to be stated, and shall be in one sentence. I am a Christian Socialist, i.e., I believe that Socialism is the best programme of social betterment, and that Christianity is its only possible dynamic. I believe in “collective ownership and co-operative use and control,” but I recognise that the world can never see this until it acknowledges Christ as King. Once, for a brief moment, the members of the early Church had “all things common,” and when all men are “filled with the Spirit” we all see that phenomenon again. And because I am a Christian and a Socialist these articles doubly grieve me.

They are, however, a proof that religion is perennially interesting. When first they were commenced Mr Blatchford spoke of asking the circulation of his paper. An increase of upwards of

11,000 readers proves how widespread is the desire for guidance in the all-important matter of religion. The pity of it is that here is a case of "the blind leading the blind." Early on in the controversy a reader threatened to cease his subscription to the paper and withdraw his advertisements if the articles were continued, and he was pilloried as an unwise, unrighteous man, told that his spirit was "the spirit of sectarian intolerance and religious rancour." His letter was representative of many, and I think "Nunquam" entirely mis-understood the position of these men. The "Clarion" was founded to spread Socialism, not to attack religion. Had the editor of that paper worked hard to extend the influence of a Socialist paper, and it suddenly began to advocate the rights of capital, war, capitulation to party leaders, he would have been angry, and justly so. Probably he would have declined to have anything more to do with that paper. That would not be trying to injure it. If a newspaper advocates that which is inimical to my deepest hopes, I am justified in declining to render it either my influence or my financial support. Now, the "Clarion" was not founded that its editor might express his opinions on things in general, but that he might advocate Socialism. Of course, he is within his rights in introducing a matter of contention like these articles, but the wisdom of the procedure is another question.

Christianity may be damaged for a time. Some will "err from the faith." Young men especially, recognising in Blatchford a political leader, will all too readily accept his guidance in religion. They will read nothing on the other side, and will never know how much the Christian religion has to say for itself. All through life they will go maimed, who might have known the freedom wherewith Christ makes men free. But, finally, Christian teachers will be made to think, Christian advocates made to work, and their thought and toil will be more fruitful than now it is.

While he MAY damage Christianity, he MUST damage Socialism. "Socialism," he tells us, "is part of a religion." Undoubtedly, the thing which for years retarded the acceptance of socialistic teaching was the widespread belief that Socialist and Atheist spelt one and the same. That idea was dying a natural death, but "Nunquam" has revived it. I believe it is no secret that men high in the counsels of the I.L.P., men like Councillor Brocklehurst, of Manchester, deplore the controversy for this very reason. The Labour Church was a revolt against that idea. It emphasised the truth that "man does not live by bread alone." Mr Blatchford himself has splendidly enforced that truth in his pamphlet

#### "ALTRUISM,"

my copy of which is dated 1902. There I read that he "believes in the ultimate success of Socialism—firstly, be-

cause Socialism is just and reasonable in itself; and secondly, because Socialism has behind it the strongest sentiment of modern times—the sentiment of human love and mercy, called Altruism. Sever the Socialist movement from the Altruistic sentiment, and it is a lost cause. Never without the impetus of human love can Socialism be established. Losing the sentiment of human love it could not last. Reduced to a mechanical system of cold justice and economic organisation, it would be more hateful, and much less durable, than the anarchy which now prevails."

When that statement met with objection, Mr Blatchford wrote :

" We are told that this Gospel of Altruism is identical with the Gospel of Christ, and that this gospel has been preached for eighteen centuries to deaf ears and obdurate hearts. It is a beautiful gospel, say our practical friends, but it is futile. After eighteen centuries of pious iteration, nothing has come of it.

" Has nothing come of it? But almost every noble action and sweet personality in all those centuries has come of it. A very great deal of our progress has come of it. All the mercy and patience we have in the present, and all the hope we have in the future have come of it. And let the day of Socialism be near or far, when that day arrives, Socialism also will have come of it.

" Moreover, let us remember that the very fact that this gospel of love has lived for eighteen centuries, against long odds and bitter opposition, is a proof of its vitality and of its truth."

I appeal from the Mr Blatchford of the "Clarion" to the Mr Blatchford of that little book. Now he seems to think that religion may be blotted out, and all that is worthy in it remain untouched. Through all these articles, Mr Blatchford refuses to face what would happen if success crowned his campaign against religion. What sanction has morality then? A rector put this question plainly in the pages of the "Clarion," and was told that the answer was obvious, men

" Are NOT wolves or hogs. They should be, and will be, honourable and unselfish, just as they should and will practise personal cleanliness; because the mean, the cruel, and the dishonest, like the dirty, are and will be unhappy in themselves and unpopular amongst their fellows. The drunkard, the liar, the thief, or the sloven, loses his self-respect, and the respect of the men and women whose friendship and good opinion he prizes. There is no stronger motive for human action than that which phrenologists call "love of approbation." He who lives foully or immorally gets no approbation. Then men like to be happy, and a rascal or a skunk can no more be happy than a dirty man can be comfortable."

But what is the difference between men and hogs? Or, as the Bible puts it, "How much is a man better than a sheep?" Haecke! denies him the possession of a soul; and his brain, we are told, is mere matter, not different in kind from the brain of an animal. The difference is only in degree. Rob man of all that makes him man, and how long will he act as though he were a superior creature? I turn from Blatchford to Haeckel, from the pupil to the master, and read: "Our own 'human nature,' which exalted itself into an image of God in its anthropistic illusion, sinks to the level of a placental mammal, which has no more value for the universe at large than the ant, the fly of a summer's day, the microscopic infusorium, or the smallest bacillus. Humanity is but a transitory phase of the evolution of an eternal substance, a particular phenomenal form of matter and energy, the true proportion of which we soon perceive when we set it on the background of infinite space and eternal time." Men believing that, the men who lack the training and environment of our superior folk, will not help on the cause of reform much.

I deny, too, the statement that mean and dishonest men are either unhappy in themselves or unpopular among their fellows. Experience is against Mr Blatchford on that point. And I might instance Mr Pitt Hardacre, who is, I believe, a personal friend of the editor of the "Clarion," and who was the lessee of the Comedy Theatre, Manchester, a man enjoying much personal popularity; but the recent slander case tried in our law-courts showed him to be a man of notorious immorality and cruelty. Men may do wrong and be happy, aye, and be popular into the bargain. "The real nobility," Mr Blatchford says, "lies deeper than any creed or dogma reaches." It does, but not deeper than religion.

### THE FUNDAMENTAL MISTAKE.

The fundamental mistake of all these articles is that religion is a creed. It is a LIFE, an experience. Take away the sanctions, and you take away morality. Every eclipse of the Sun of Righteousness is followed speedily and inevitably by moral darkness. When one man pointed out these articles were merely destructive—and we know with what ease miscellaneous objections can be brought against any working system—and asked what the "Clarion" proposed to put in their place, he was told his letter was "immoral," and that he was "a person of a grossly material and irreligious mind." He ought to do right and seek truth. But the man is possessed of the conviction that he does right and has found truth. His query is, what is to take the place of these? And to that there is no answer. "You see," says Mr Blatchford, "I am not trying to rob any man of his hope of heaven; I am only trying to inspire his hope on earth." To which we say that the destruction of religion leaves men without inspiration for life, and

without hope for eternity. It brings to my mind Mr Moody's story of the dying Atheist, who was encouraged by his friends "Don't be afraid. Hold on, man; hold on to the last!" The dying man answered, "That is what I want to do; but tell me what to hold on to."

I am doubtful of the gain to the world when "the Christian myth" is swept away; but I am still more doubtful of the power of Haeckel to sweep it away. This is the book which "makes the origin of worlds as clear as the origin of life in those worlds." You see there is no room left for agnosticism. There is dogmatism for you with a vengeance. "Even a packed jury would hardly dare to refuse a verdict in Prof. Haeckel's favour. To an open-minded, level-headed man, the evidence is conclusive." Well, let us see.

I have to remark, in the first place, that I am not impressed so much by the science or the philosophy of the book (and I have read it twice carefully), as by its animus against the Christian religion. It bears on the cover the inscription:

#### "HAECKEL'S GREAT WORK."

"The work," says its translator, Mr McCabe, "is unanswered because it is unanswerable," forgetting, or not knowing the fact that in Germany it has been answered by Prof. Loofs, in his "Anti-Haeckel," and in England, dealt with by Prof. Fairbairn in "The Philosophy of the Christian Religion," and more fully by Rev F. Ballard, in his "Miracles of Unbelief," and answered again and again by anticipation. The introduction of the book draws attention to the fact that Mr W. H. Mallock, himself an unbeliever, has set the seal of his approval upon the book. Prof. Haeckel is a scientist, and I expect to find in his book careful and guarded statements; instead of which I come across assertions of this kind. "No other scientific explanation of the origin of the human race is possible." "I am fully convinced that this 'ripe fruit' of the tree of knowledge will receive no important addition, and suffer no substantial modification during the brief spell of life that remains to me." The man who so speaks does not speak as a scientist, but as a dogmatist. Apparently there is only one subject of which Prof. Haeckel is not absolute master. Concerning heredity, he says: "We dare not claim, even after forty years of research, that all its aspects are clear to us." On all other topics, when Haeckel has spoken, let no man open his mouth.

I deny his right to speak of the Christian faith at all, since he lacks even an elementary knowledge of its position. The inaccuracies of statement in reference to religion are appalling. Let me draw your attention to a few of them.

## HIS IDEA OF CHRISTIANITY.

Concerning immortality, he says:

"The fantastic notions which the Christian Church disseminates as to the eternal life of the immortal soul after the dissolution of the body are just as materialistic as the dogma of 'the resurrection of the body.' In his interesting work on 'Religion in the Light of the Darwinian Theory,' Savage justly remarks: 'It is one of the standing charges of the Church against science that it is materialistic. I must say, in passing, that the whole ecclesiastical doctrine of a future life has always been, and still is, materialism of the purest type. It teaches that the material body shall rise, and dwell in a material heaven.' To prove this one has only to read impartially some of the sermons and ornate discourses in which the glory of the future life is extolled as the highest good of the Christian, and belief in it is laid down to be the foundation of morality. According to them, all the joys of the most advanced modern civilisation await the pious believer in Paradise, while the 'All-loving Father' reserves his eternal fires for the godless materialist." That assertion is wholly untrue. No instructed mind believes that Christianity teaches that "a material body shall rise and dwell in a material heaven."

Concerning Providence, he remarks that "the premature death of a brilliant young physicist of so much promise cannot be sufficiently deplored. Like the premature death of Spinoza, Raphael, Schubert, and many other great men, it is one of those brutal facts of human history which are enough of themselves to destroy the untenable myth of a 'wise Providence' and an 'All-loving Father in heaven,'" and in so writing, proves that he has never studied at all the Christian doctrine of Providence.

Concerning Pantheism, he tells us that it is "the result of an advanced conception of nature in the civilised mind," and consequently "much younger than theism," a statement in absolute contradiction to fact.

Concerning Theology, I find the characteristic exaggeration that over the problem of the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Trinity "millions of Christian theologians have racked their brains in vain for the last 1,000 years." MILLIONS of theologians! These are, however, minor matters. I pass to things of greater importance.

Concerning the Gospels, he tells us: "As to the four canonical Gospels, we now know that they were selected from a host of contradictory and forged manuscripts of the first three centuries by the 318 bishops who assembled at the Council of Nicaea in 327. The entire list of Gospels numbered forty; the canonical list contains four. As the contending and mutually

abusive bishops could not agree about the choice, they determined to leave the selection to a miracle. They put all the books (according to the 'Synodicon' of Pappus) together underneath the altar, and prayed that the apocryphal books, of human origin, might remain there, and the genuine, inspired books might be miraculously placed on the table of the Lord. And that, says tradition, really occurred."

The man who writes like that knows no more of the Christian religion than the inmates of our asylums. Professor Haeckel supposes Pappus to be a Church father. He was a seventeenth century editor. As a matter of fact, the Council of Nicæa—which met in 325, A.D., not 327—did not meddle with the subject of the Holy Scriptures. The tale of the jumping books is moonshine. The authority of our New Testament books does not rest upon the vote of any Council, but upon the spontaneous consent of the whole Christian world from its earliest age.

One more instance. Concerning the paternity of our Lord he tells us: "Joseph Pandera, the Roman officer of a Calabrian legion which was in Judæa, seduced Miriam of Bethlehem and was the father of Jesus." This statement from a tract called "The Toldoth Jeschua or Jeshu," he says has "more title to credence than all the other statements about the birth of Christ," but "naturally these historical details are carefully avoided by the official theologian." Now the plain truth is that every statement concerning the Virgin birth has been repeatedly examined, both by the friends and foes of Christianity. No fewer than three books and two complete articles in recent statements of the Christian faith have been published on it during the last few years. The tract referred to is of Jewish origin, but by the Jews themselves is acknowledged as scurrilous and untrue. No scholar has ever suggested that here we have the explanation of the birth of our Lord, and the fact that Haeckel turns to this theory puts his scholarship out of court.

In the chapter of "monistic ethics," which are "completely at one with Christianity," I am amazed to read that the Christian religion results in the neglect of the body and in uncleanness, that it has no place for the love of animals, that it belittles the life of the family, that it teaches that woman is subordinate to man. All these are in complete contradiction to the teaching and belief of the Christian Church.

My study of the book proves to me beyond doubt that Prof. Haeckel knows nothing of Christianity. His statements under that head being so utterly—I had almost said invariably—untrue does not pre-dispose me to accept

## HIS TEACHING CONCERNING SCIENCE.

But let us look at that, also.

The book is an exposition of monism, i.e., that "every single object in the world which comes within the sphere of our cognizance, all individual forms of existence, are but special transitory forms—ACCIDENTS or MODES—of substance. These modes are material things when we regard them under the attribute of EXTENSION (or "occupation of space"), but forces and ideas, when we consider them under the attribute of THOUGHT (or "energy")." That being so, no room is left in his system for freewill. Man has no soul, no God, no immortality. That is the theory, and I cannot help noticing how Prof. Haeckel ignores everything that does not suit his theory. I shall return to that in a moment.

Haeckel is a biologist. In that realm he is an authority. Concerning other branches of science he confesses, "my own command of them is uneven and defective. "I am myself too little informed in physics and mathematics to enter into a critical discussion." None the less, he recommends a theory of J. C. Vogt's, which concerns physics, a theory that has not won the acceptance of physicists, to his fellow biologists, and proceeds to accept it and argue from it! He has no knowledge of psychology, the science that treats of the living principle in man, and yet tells us "that most of the psychological literature of the day is so much waste paper." Prof. James of Harvard has that knowledge which Haeckel lacks, and he says: "I can, of course, put myself into the sectarian scientist's attitude, and imaginatively that the world of sensations, and of scientific laws and objects, may be all. But whenever I do this, I hear that inward monitor of which W. K. Clifford once wrote, whispering the word 'bosh'! Humbug is humbug, even though it bear the scientific name, and the total expression of human experience as I view it objectively, invincibly urges me beyond the narrow 'scientific' bounds."

As the Rev Ambrose Pope pointed out in the pages of the "Clarion," here is a scientific fact, a biological fact, which Prof. Haeckel has every right to insist on, the fact of evolution. Now to that fact the Professor applies a psychological theory, a theory not accepted by any psychologist of repute, the theory that mental phenomena are the results of physical phenomena, and from that he proceeds quite logically to deduce that man has no soul, no freedom, no immortality. But the theory is the very thing in dispute. That remains to be proved, and the proof of it does not belong to Prof. Haeckel's branch of science.

Again, Prof. Haeckel has not studied philosophy. He is a biologist, but proceeds to teach the philosopher his own business.

To his biological fact he again applies a theory, this time a philosophical theory; he calls it "physiological monism." Briefly, the universe is not dual in its ultimate nature, not compounded, as philosophers had imagined, of spirit and matter; there is only matter. That being so, God vanishes from the scene of affairs. But, again, the theory is the very thing in question. And it will be proved, if ever it can be proved, not by physical science, but by philosophical science, of which Prof. Haeckel is not an exponent. And yet, concerning this universal substance, upon which the theory is built which "Nunquam" says "demolishes the entire structure upon which the religions of the world are built," concerning this substance, Haeckel himself says "We do not even know whether it exists or not"!!! What sort of argument is this? The fact is, we are in the region of Fairyland. "Alice in Wonderland" is sober history compared with this!

How completely Haeckel has to disown his fellow scientists may be seen by this book. Leibnitz, philosopher and mathematician, whom Haeckel calls "the gifted Leibnitz," rejected this theory of monism. Linné, the founder of modern botany, propounded a theory "fraught with the gravest peril to science." Those by the way. Concerning others, "the famous embryologist, Carl Ernst Baer," published a book contradicting the theories of Haeckel. But then says our author: "We must premise that, though Baer was a scientist of the highest order, his original monistic views were gradually marred by a tinge of mysticism with the advance of age, and he eventually became a thorough dualist."

Again, "in Germany, Wilhelm Wundt, of Leipzig, is considered to be the ablest living psychologist; he has the inestimable advantage over most other philosophers of a thorough zoological, anatomical, and psychological education." He published a work which went in the direction of what Haeckel believes, but thirty years afterwards published a second and entirely modified edition of his work. The important principles of the first edition are entirely abandoned in the second. This, thinks our author, was not due to larger light and growing knowledge, but to advancing age.

"Other interesting examples of this change of views are found in two of the most famous living scientists, R. Virchow and E. Du Bois-Reymond; the metamorphoses of their fundamental views on psychology cannot be overlooked, as both these Berlin biologists have played a most important part at Germany's greatest university for more than forty years, and have, therefore, directly and indirectly, had a most profound influence on the modern mind. Rudolph Virchow, the eminent founder of cellular pathology, was a pure monist in the best days of his scientific activity. But Virchow also, twenty-eight years afterwards, recanted, and

took the view that force and matter, spirit and body are not one substance, but two."

I quote once more, this time Haeckel's opinion on Kant. He is "the most famous of modern thinkers." In his youth he was "critical"; the older Kant was "dogmatic." This paragraph I must quote in full:—

"This entire change of philosophical principles, which we find in Wundt, as we found it in Kant, Virchow, Du Bois, Reymond, Carl Ernst Baer, and others, is very interesting. In their youth these able and talented scientists embrace the whole field of biological research in a broad survey, and make strenuous efforts to find a unifying, natural basis for their knowledge; in their later years they have found that this is not completely attainable, and so they entirely abandon the idea. In extenuation of these psychological metamorphoses they can, naturally, plead that in their youth they overlooked the difficulties of the great task, and misconceived the true goal; with the maturer judgment of age and the accumulation of experience they were convinced of their errors, and discovered the true path to the source of truth. On the other hand, it is possible to think that great scientists approach their task with less prejudice and more energy in their earlier years—that their vision is clearer and their judgment purer; the experiences of later years sometimes have the effect, not of enriching, but of disturbing, the mind, and with old age there comes a gradual decay of the brain, just as happens in all other organs."

And the man who writes this is himself an old man of 66! Nor have we yet finished. Darwin's "Letters on Life," and Romanes' "Thoughts on Religion," show that they also afterwards rejected Haeckel's theory. The chapter in this book on "Physio Gradations," dealing with memory, instinct, emotion, and will, is entirely drawn from Romanes, and yet I look in vain for any acknowledgment of the final conclusions to which Romanes came.

Prof. Haeckel is a striking example of Sir Robert Anderson's dictum that a man "may be unrivalled as an expert in his own particular line, albeit gifted with less power of judgment and common sense than an average school-boy." In an article dealing with Sir A. Conan Doyle's detective stories, Sir Robert Anderson remarks that "all classes of the community may profit by this lesson; the lesson of analytical thinking, thinking backward—and by none is it more needed than by those who fancy they need it least, our scientific experts and teachers of science."

When I come to seek

**THE METHOD BY WHICH HAECKEL ARRIVES AT**  
his conclusions, I find that it is "firstly, experience; secondly, inference." "Scientific experience comes to us by observation and

experiment." That is the method of the theologian also. Haeckel, however, will not have this. "Religious faith always means belief in a miracle, and as such is in hopeless contradiction with the natural faith of reason." After reading Haeckel I am bound to say that there is much more belief in the miraculous, the absurdly miraculous in his system, than in mine.

This is his belief concerning creation: The universal substance of which the world is made is endowed both with sensation and movement, and there is neither beginning nor end to it. "The universe is infinite and eternally in motion." Now, I say that it requires a greater act of faith to accept that than to believe that "In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is." In declining to accept the Christian position, and yet accepting this, I find no sign of reason. It is straining at the gnat, but swallowing the camel. For Haeckel has to adopt the theory of spontaneous generation, a theory as far off from proof as ever it has been. Spontaneous generation, he tells us, "is an indispensable thesis in any natural theory of evolution. I entirely agree with the assertion that to reject abiogenesis is to admit a miracle." Yet neither Prof. Haeckel nor any other man has ever been able to discover a solitary instance of spontaneous generation. Still between the living and the dead there is a great gulf fixed.

Or, take this assertion: "The remarkable progress of technical science has made it possible for us to convert the different physical forces from one form to another; heat may be changed into molar movement, or movement of mass; this in turn into light or sound, and then into electricity, and so forth."

Why, then, should it be thought impossible to convert the sinner into the saint? One of the favourite arguments against the atonement is that neither pardon nor penitence can avail to blot out the past, to alter things accomplished. To me it is as easy to believe that the action which was wrong and foolish can, by God's mercy, be changed into a means of grace, as that heat may be turned into movement.

I am no scientist, but I find the pages of Haeckel's book full of plain contradictions, of unwarrantable assertions, of unjustifiable assumptions; in fact, it lacks nearly every element that makes for truth. And then "Nunquam" coolly tells us, "I want my readers to understand that I am not offering them gaudy novelties, but durable goods." It is upon this book, mind you, that "Nunquam" builds his contention against Christianity, from its pages that he draws his arguments.

"Science has not proved that there is no God; but science has made it, I think, impossible for any reasonable man to accept the account of God, and of God's relations to man, given in any religion of which I have ever heard."

So says Mr Blatchford, influenced by this book. Then we must make our appeal to science. I am no authority upon science. Even Mr Blatchford—speaking ex-cathedra—is no authority on science. The appeal must be to authority. I say nothing now of the testimony of the scientists quoted in Haeckel's own work, testimony that is in direct opposition to his; but I shall quote the evidence of men at least equally qualified to judge with Haeckel.

### THE TESTIMONY OF SCIENTISTS.

It is instructive that no mention is made in this book of Wallace, the friend of Darwin, and an independent discoverer of evolution. In his book on "Darwinism," Wallace plainly declares, "the facts taken in their entirety compel us to recognise some origin for them wholly distinct from that which has served to account for the animal characteristics."

Huxley, to whom both Haeckel and Blatchford make their appeal, frankly says that "the materialistic position, that there is nothing in the world but matter, force, and necessity, is as utterly devoid of justification as the most baseless of theological dogmas."

In his "Lay Sermons," Huxley describes the development of life in the egg of the water newt, as he watched it under a powerful microscope, how "the plastic matter undergoes changes so rapid, and yet so steady and purpose-like in their succession that one can only compare them to those operated by a skilled modeller upon a formless lump of clay," and then he goes on: "It is as if a delicate finger traced out the line to be occupied by the spinal column, and moulded the contour of the body, pinching up the head at one end, and the tail at the other, and fashioning flank and limb into due salamandrine proportions in so artistic a way, that, after watching the process hour by hour, one is almost involuntarily possessed by the notion that some more subtle aid to vision than an achromatic would show the hidden artist with his plan before him, striving with skilful manipulation to perfect his work."

How far that is from Haeckel's position; how near to the Christian faith!

Even Darwin—and the effort of Blatchford to neutralise the confession is useless,—asked by Tennyson, "Your theory of evolution does not make against Christianity?" answered "No, certainly not."

I quote next Sir Oliver Lodge, who, before Marconi, unfolded the mysteries of electric waves: "If we are open to influence from each other by non-corporeal methods, may we not be open to influence from beings in another region or of another order? And if so, may we not be aided, inspired, guided by a cloud of witnesses—not witnesses only, but helpers, agents like ourselves of the im-

manent God? How do we know that in the mental sphere these cannot answer prayer, as we in the physical? . . . It may be that prayer is an instrument which can control or influence higher agencies, and by its neglect we may be losing the use of a mighty engine to help on our lives, and those of others. . . . The region of Religion and the region of a complete Science are one."

One more instance. Lord Kelvin, than whom science has no more authoritative living exponent, lecturing last May on "Present-day Rationalism; an examination of Darwin," said that "he could not accept the saying that with regard to the origin of life science neither affirmed nor denied creative power. SCIENCE POSITIVELY AFFIRMED CREATIVE POWER. Science made every one feel a miracle in himself and compelled them to accept a creative and directive power, not as an article of traditional faith, but as an article of belief from which there was no escape. Modern biologists were coming once more to the acceptance of something unknown which they might call "vital force." In thinking of that unknown object, they were in science all agnostics; they did not know. They only knew God in His works, but they were absolutely forced by science to admit and believe in a directive power—something more than physical dynamical electric forces. There was nothing between absolute scientific belief in creative power and the acceptance of the theory of a fortuitous concourse of atoms. But it was absurd to think of a sprig of moss, a crystal, a microbe, a living animal arising through a number of atoms falling together of their own accord. A million of millions of millions of years could not in that way give them a beautiful world like ours. In science they had a knowledge that there was a spiritual influence in the world about them. Lord Kelvin commended the breezy atmosphere of free thought in Professor Henslow's lecture. Let them be free in their thought. They were then bound to come to the conviction that science was not antagonistic, but a help to religion."

In a letter to the "Times," Lord Kelvin withdrew the statement he had made that creative agency must be accepted with regard to a crystal, but maintained it in regard to organic matter, and he added: "Every action of human free-will is a miracle to physical and chemical and mathematical science." He further told how, walking forty years ago, with Liebig in the country, he asked the great chemist if he believed the grass and flowers grew by mere chemical forces. "No," he replied; "no more than I could believe that a book of botany describing them could grow by mere chemical forces."

#### THE TEMPER OF OUR AGE.

All this means that the scientific attitude of our time towards religion is widely changed from that prevalent some quarter of a

century ago. Haeckel is not the advance guard of a new force marching to attack religion: he is the remnant of an army that has been scattered to the four winds of heaven. His science is out of date. Mr. Chesterton describes "Nunquam" as the last of our great English freethinkers. Haeckel is the last of the scientific materialists. The very language of science is changed: the Mighty Atom has had to give way to the concept of a Universal Substance, which originates both mind and matter. The Agnosticism of Haeckel's day was blatant and contemptuously hostile; the Agnosticism of our day is wistful and full of recognition of the place religion fills. The fact is that science and religion move in spheres entirely distinct. Nothing that science can say is likely to uproot the Christian faith, for it is the answer to man's undying hope.

So far Haeckel, with whom this controversy began. Mr Blatchford, however, soon found it inadvisable to maintain his original position, and, while declining to disown Haeckel or correct his earlier mis-statements, proceeded to attack religion, "on his own." That attack is a more serious matter for the Christian Church, for "Nunquam's" fight is waged against the Christian religion only, and against the organised form of that religion to be found in the Christian Church. His contentions are sufficiently plain and emphatic:

"My contention is that ANY religion which teaches that God interferes in earthly affairs; that God can be moved by prayer; that Christ, or Buddha, or Mahomet, or any other prophet, was divine; that men who disobey the orders of a Church will go to hell; that men who, after doing evil, believe in Christ, will go to heaven; that Christ, or any other man or divinity, ever performed miracles; that God ever dictated any Bible to any prophet; that mankind was cursed for any fail or sin; that Christ or any other Saviour by his death removed that curse; that the dead shall arise, and their bodies be re-created; that the good shall be happy, and the bad miserable—**ANY** religion teaching any of these things is a delusion. That is my position."

But while that is his contention his arguments are all against Christianity, indeed one of his favourite fads is to contrast Buddhism with the Christian religion, greatly to the disadvantage of our faith.

The attack is

#### A BLUNDERBUSS AFFAIR.

Evolution, witchcraft, freewill, the atrocities of the Old Testament revelation, the Churches and war, spiritual perception, the origins of Christianity, the Higher Criticism, Buddhism, the resurrection, the Jewish Jehovah are jumbled together in a strange medley. Mr Blatchford

's conducting this campaign in his own way, but one may be allowed the humble remark that his way is decidedly a peculiar one. Undoubtedly he tries to be fair. When one thinks of how a controversy of this kind might have been conducted, there is something to be thankful for. A preacher, accustomed sometimes to hear the pulpit called "the coward's castle," may be forgiven some amusement in noting that an editor is much in the same box. He can reply to such remarks in the letters he prints as is convenient from his own point of view, and ignore the rest. He can take as much space as he likes to answer arguments that have to be compressed into a short letter. He is prone to shift his ground. That has been done several times over.

He is ready enough to complain of unfairness in those who oppose him, but not sufficiently aware of the fact that he himself can be unfair. If hard words are to be counted the scale will incline on Blatchford's side. To mention a few instances:—

"If the leaders of religion brought the same vigour and subtlety of mind to bear upon religion which they bring to bear upon any criticism of religion, if they weighed the Bible as they have weighed astronomy and evolution, the Christian religion would not last a year."

What is that but imputing a motive? And many much worse instances might be quoted, the assumption underlying them being "Nunquam" seeks the truth, but we are interested in hiding the truth. I say that is not being fair. Replying to Dr. Aked, Mr Blatchford says:—

"He displays in his defence a relish for personal invective which would have won the admiration of St. Urnulphus himself."

"The rev. gentleman is a perambulating reservoir of gall and wormwood."

He somewhat offensively says to Rev. Ambrose Pope, "Now, my lad!" He tells us "we muddle our wits by giving literal values to metaphors." So that he ought not to object when Mr Ballard retorts on him in kind. One illustration must suffice of what is objected to in Mr Blatchford's "style." Archdeacon Wilson speaks of Mr Blatchford as lacking spiritual perception, and this "Nunquam" translates to mean that he is "a fellow of no delicacy," and having twice repeated the phrase, at the end of his article he puts it in inverted commas, and in a later article treats the phrase as though it were a saying of Archdeacon Wilson's. I don't think that is quite fair.\*

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\* As this pamphlet goes to press, "Nunquam" writes that he puts the phrase into quotation marks because it is a quotation from "A Tale of Two Cities." He does not say why the quotation marks are omitted in his earliest use of it; nor does he acknowledge that it is not a fair interpretation of Archdeacon Wilson's words.

But in the later articles, Mr Blatchford has begun to complain with some bitterness that his opponents are trying to undermine his personal influence. His comment is:

"There is the sting. This man, "The Clarion" editor, has personal influence. That influence is dangerous. It must be destroyed."

Well, of course, we are trying to destroy the religious influence of Mr Blatchford. The position is this: the articles in the "Clarion" are read by many, not on account of their intrinsic worth, but because they are written by Mr Blatchford. Their teaching is accepted, not because the things stated are proved—that is emphatically what is still to be done—but because they are put in a taking fashion; put as Mr Blatchford so well knows how to put them. The Rev W. L. Watkinson tells how he saw recently in a Manchester shop window the notice, "Artificial gems set in real gold." That advertisement exposes the peril of this controversy, the teaching is artificial, but the setting is real gold. False doctrine is recommended with genuine eloquence. We cannot, "for obvious reasons," imitate Mr Blatchford's style, but we can hope to show that Mr Blatchford's reasoning is faulty, and his conclusions wrong. We do not fear the arguments, but we do fear for the results upon some minds when Mr Blatchford uses the arguments.

And it ought to be remembered that it is difficult for Christian men to write calmly about that which touches their deepest life. That is the excuse for the man who suggested the use of the horse-whip, only an excuse, I know. A man can keep cool when Christianity and bi-metallism, religion and athletics, all stand on one level for him, and none of them have authority. But when the springs of his life are touched he gets warm. I have even known Mr Blatchford grow warm in the defence and advocacy of Socialism.

These things being premised, I want to say that Mr Blatchford's articles are not without

#### A TOUCH OF EGOISM.

So far from being ashamed of the statement that he intends to demolish the entire structure upon which the religions of the world are built, he tells us that he repeats it, and means to maintain it. In one article he classes himself with Galileo, and in another he parades a long list of the books he has read. Throughout, the assumption is made that these articles are necessarily making known the truth, and nothing beside. There is egotism in that, and dogmatism. Listen:

"I knew he had not answered me. I knew he could not answer me. There is no answer possible to my evolution theory."

**That is not agnosticism ; it is infallibility.**

"We have ceased to believe in miracles. When we come upon a miracle in any historical document, we feel not only that the miracle is untrue, but also that its presence reduces the value of the document in which it is contained."

Again, I say, that is dogmatism.

I find, too, a confusion of thought. Religion and theology are treated as if they were interchangeable terms, whereas religion is the fact and theology only the theory. For religion men need no intellectual training, but for theology they do. Mr Blatchford assumes that since Mr Rhondda Williams denies the literal accuracy of the Bible, he does not believe in its inspiration. That is a mistake. He says that the Churches are ranged against truth and injustice, but that there are good men in the Churches fighting on the side of right. But a Church, as such, cannot take sides. If the men composing the Church are on the side of progress, then the Church is on the side of progress also. He says the Christian asks us to believe that

"God inspired man with a fabulous theory of creation, and that since then God has inspired other men to CONTRADICT the teaching of the previous fifty thousand years."

That, also, is a confusion of thought. We teach children by figure and picture, and so God taught the race in its childhood. But the first teaching must have in itself the germ of all later teaching; it must be capable of expansion, and God's teaching is. Nothing in the revelations of science contradicts the teaching of the Bible on creation: it only expands that teaching. When Mr Blatchford wishes to illustrate his ideas of Providence he actually goes to the theatre for his illustration. It is like an enquirer going to the "Times" or the "Morning Post" for an explanation of Socialism.

#### FOR SERIOUS ARGUMENT

two things are necessary, if not three things, and Mr Blatchford should take note of them. He must deal with the truth Christians hold in common. Let him argue, say from the Apostle's Creed, which, though variously interpreted, is accepted by the immense majority of Christian believers, Roman or Protestant. The "Clarion," for weeks past, has been quoting a High Church magazine against Dr. Aked, Dr. Talmage against the Rev Ambrose Pope, Father Ignatius against the Rev Rhondda Williams. It is all very entertaining, but it is not serious argument. Suppose a German asked, "What is the present fiscal policy of Great Britain?" and Mr Blatchford expounded to him the belief of Mr Chamberlain, Mr Balfour, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and Mr Blatchford himself, and jumbled these four separate theories of fiscal policy

into a unity, or something approaching one, the result would merely be a darkening of counsel with many words. I submit that Mr Blatchford is doing that very thing with religion. Just as he refuses to accept the crude ideas concerning Socialism which are afloat, so do we refuse to accept the crude ideas concerning religion, and I know none cruder than Mr Blatchford's own.

Now this is done of set purpose. Mr Blatchford tells us:—

"The obsolete dogmas in which no thoughtful, educated Christian believes are still held as sacred and essential truths by millions, and are serious bars to progress, and hindrances to the spread of truth."

Then let him wage warfare against the obsolete dogmas, and we will bid him God-speed. At present he is confounding things that differ. His style of argument is permissible to one seeking to purify Christianity, but not to one seeking to destroy it. Strip the parasite from the tree if you want the tree to grow; but if you want to fell the tree you must attack the tree, and not the parasite. When the "Clarion" argues against the perversions of Christianity he wins our sympathy, as, for instance, when he enters a strong protest against the awful picture of hell quoted in the pages of his paper, and declares:—

"It ought to be made a penal offence to torture children with such pernicious falsehoods."

It ought; but that is not the teaching of Christianity, and Mr Blatchford knows it is not. Only the other day, in his inimitable style, Mr Blatchford poured scorn upon those Liberal politicians whose one idea of meeting the arguments of the advocates of protective tariffs was by pictures of big and little loaves. Let him beware lest he deals with religion after that fashion. He must argue upon the accepted standards of belief in universal Christendom.

And he must further quote from the Revised Version of the Scriptures. To turn to the Authorised Version is as if in some standard text-book he used an old edition, well knowing that in subsequent issues important corrections had been made. It is nothing to the point to say that the Authorised Version is read in the Churches, since we are concerned not with what men think the Bible says, but with what it actually does say. This is by no means unimportant, and had "Nunquam" followed this rule several points that he has scored would not have been made. I remember that he is seeking for truth, not smartness.

And in the third place, he must make up his mind what view he is going to take of Jesus Christ. He cannot both claim Him and confute Him:

"When you want justice, when you want reason, when you want mercy, when you want love, you have to go to MEN; to men like Christ."

"If the Christ of the Scriptures is the real Christ, His message is one of hate and horror."

"We Secularists or Agnostics hold that Christ and Buddha, if such persons ever existed, were good men."

Now, "Nunquam" is entitled to argue that Christ was a good man, or that Christ was a bad man, or that Christ never had any existence; but he is not entitled to argue from all these standpoints. It is only fair that he should make up his mind which view he will adopt, and stick to it. Apparently it is to be the old Atheist position, that He never lived at all.

Beyond this, one other thing is necessary if Mr Blatchford would understand the religion he reviles. I almost hesitate to mention it, after all that has been said, but it is the crux of the whole matter. He MUST learn that "spiritual things are spiritually discerned."

#### SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT.

Cartmel sees on the hills a vision of God, and "Nunquam" asks how he may see that vision too? He resents being told that only by spiritual perception is that possible. There is no doubt that Pharisaism often employs the statement that it may discredit truth, but none the less, the man who wrote that "Nunquam's" position was as that of a deaf man asking what music was like, hit the nail on the head. There are men who ridicule music "as the mere scraping of catgut by resined camel's hair." And there are men to whom the deep realities of Christian experience are an idle dream. The beauty of the Christian character makes no appeal to them. The Gospel narrative seems to them a tissue of improbabilities. Their eyes are holden. I am sorry to say it, but "Nunquam" must be numbered amongst these. As Mr Ballard points out, following a discussion on the Fatherhood of God and the atonement of Christ, comes this:—

"A pre-historic dam has been discovered in Oregon. It is supposed to have been uttered by Adam." \*

That shows what we mean when we say that he lacks spiritual perception.

\* I am very glad that Mr Blatchford has just disowned this joke. He says, in reply to my address, "I have never said any such thing, and this is the first I have heard of it." Mr Blatchford will find it at the close of his article in the "Clarion," for July 17th. It forms a footnote to the third column.

"Nunquam's" manner of dealing with the resurrection is instructive. He heads his article "The Nature of the Evidence Considered," and proceeds to try the case as police court cases are tried. (It may be remarked in passing that, subjected to the method Mr Blatchford adopts, no fact of history could be proved.) Now, I say such a column could not have been penned by a man of fine spiritual instinct. The resurrection, if it be true at all, is a truth carrying stupendous consequences. It is the core of the belief of devout Christians the world over. Surely here is a subject that ought to be handled with delicacy and some regard for the feelings of Christians! But I find nothing of that. In this article, at least, Mr Blatchford condescended to vulgarity.

"My claim is," he tells us, "that ideas relating to spiritual things must be weighed by the same faculties as ideas relating to material things. That is to say, man can only judge in religious matters, as he judges in all other matters, by his reason."

And again he asks:

"What is a 'spiritual truth?' It is neither more nor less than a mental idea. It is an idea originating in the brain, and it can only be 'discerned,' or judged, or understood, by an act of reason performed by the brain."

A spiritual truth, a mental idea? It is just there that "Nunquam" is mistaken. The brain is not the only organ by which man apprehends truth.

"It is the heart, and not the brain,  
That to the highest doth attain."

Feeling and assurance are not one and the same thing. The knowledge I have concerning the things of religion, springing from my heart, is as clear, as positive, and as intelligible as the knowledge I have concerning the facts of daily life.\*

Romanes laid emphasis upon this truth: "No one is entitled," he said, "to deny the possibility of what may be termed the organ of spiritual discernment. In fact, to do so would be to vacate the position of agnosticism 'in toto,' and this, even if there were no objective or strictly scientific evidence in favour of such an organ,

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\* Mr Blatchford persists in arguing that this knowledge is a matter of feeling, that our knowledge of the truth of Christianity is reached by reasoning processes, only they are "sub-conscious." We are not unaware of those instinctive conclusions reached by such means—Mr Blatchford's illustrations of a man's dishonesty, the result of a cricket match, &c., are perfectly good—but what we assert is that our consciousness of the truth of religion is not to be classed amongst these conclusions, is not reached in any such way. The assurance we have of the truth and blessing of personal religion is as distinct from such feelings as is night from day.

such as we have in the lives of the saints, and in a lower degree in the universality of the religious sentiment." That, says "Nunquam," is a mistake. He denies the universality of the religious sentiment (in which he is wrong), and declares that we who possess it, "are really men of abnormally credulous and emotional natures: men too weak to face the facts." You see, Mr Blatchford is not averse to dealing us resounding blows; he only objects to having them dealt to him! I know men, and so does Mr Blatchford, whom his description fails to fit. They are keen and alert in business, incisive and virile in mind, open and honest as the day, and they are Christian believers. They know the reality of this spiritual organ.

"We must deal," says "Nunquam," "with this deception sternly. We must deny that human reason, which we know to be a fact, is inferior to a postulated 'spiritual' faculty which has no existence. We must insist that to make the brain the slave of a brain-created idea is as foolish as to subordinate the substance to the shadow."

How does he know that reason is a fact? The spiritual faculty is no more "postulated" than the mental faculty. Neither can be seen, but both are made manifest by their results.

From time to time, I read in the "Clarion" articles by Dangle. Suppose I say "there is no such person as Dangle." Mr Blatchford says "I know him." He calls in the testimony of others who know him. He points to his work. That is our position. We know Jesus Christ. Men may talk from now until doomsday, and they cannot change our consciousness of that.

"Like a man in wrath, the heart stands up  
And answers, I have felt."

Others know Him, too. The realities of Christian experience, the perfectness of the Christian character, and the effect of the preached Gospel of the living Christ are not to be so lightly dismissed.

### FAITH.

Mr Blatchford's position is understood when we find him saying:—

"Let a person once admit into his system the poisonous principle of 'faith,' and his judgment in religious matters will be injured for years, and probably for life."

To which we answer: Let a person refuse to admit the principle of faith, and he will never be competent to pronounce upon religion. It is impossible to banish faith from any realm. It is an absolute requisite for all life. Blatchford's chosen teacher, Haeckel, says: "The explanation of a great number of connected phenomena by

the assumption of a common cause is called a theory. Both in theory and hypothesis 'faith' (in the scientific sense) is indispensable; for here again it is the imagination that fills up the gaps left by the intelligence in our knowledge of the connection of things. The man who renounces theory altogether, and seeks to construct a pure science with certain facts alone (as often happens with wrong-headed representatives of our "exact sciences"), must give up the hope of any knowledge of causes, and, consequently, of the satisfaction of reason's demand for causality." Faith, you see, is necessary in science. It must only be banished from the sphere of religion. "Nunquam" objects to our arguing from experience, but curiously enough, he uses that argument himself:

"These people trust me, because they have tried me. They believe in me because I believe in them. They like me because I like them."

We trust Christ because we have tried Him. We believe in Him because He has believed in us. We love Him because He loves us. And we are not afraid of anything that Mr Blatchford can say. Let him make his mind easy about that. If he would understand Christianity, he must judge it by its own tests. It is futile to say to Christian advocates, "Prove it, I am open to conviction." That cannot be done until it is accepted, for Christianity is self-proved. The man who lives, moves, and breathes in unspiritual realms cannot know this demonstration. It were as reasonable to test colours by blocking up all windows that they might be judged in the darkness, or to expect to advance scholarship by destroying books. The word is fulfilled, "He that doeth My will shall know of my doctrine." The chemist, intent on discovering the component parts of some substance put into his hand, finds that analysis fails him. He cannot resolve that substance into its original elements. Very well, then he will try synthesis. He will build up combinations of various elements until he produces the substance whose composition he wishes to know. Christianity cannot be analysed by the critical faculty; but it can be created and proved by the honest heart. I invite Mr Blatchford to that experiment.

Neither can this attack upon religion be considered fair until the recognition is made that the cruelties of mediæval ages cannot be charged against religion.

"If the Christian Churches have been guilty of persecution for fifteen centuries all over the world"—(and Mr Blatchford knows perfectly well that is not a statement of fact)—"it is no defence to say that they were not following the teachings of their Founder. For fifteen centuries this persecuting religion was Christianity."

It has to be said, first, that for many centuries the Christian Church was subjected to persecution. A considerable slice must be lopped off the "fifteen centuries."

Next, that in the dark night that followed the establishment of the Church in temporal power, religion was almost wholly lost. We do right to repudiate the actions of those who were not Christians. Has it never happened in the political life of our time that a man proposed Socialism until he obtained a certain position, and then showed that he had no knowledge even of the fundamental truths of Socialism? So many a man climbed to power by the Church who knew nothing of the teachings of that Church's Master. To this argument that objections against the corruptions of mediævalism are not objections against Christianity, "Nunquam" replies :—

"That a religion which we are told is the only hope of the world, and the only means of grace, should have failed during fifteen centuries to convert its own professors to humane and reasonable principles of life is, I think, a very strong argument against the divinity of its founder and the wisdom of its teachers."

I could quote,—indeed I have already done so from "Altruism"—Mr Blatchford's opinion to the contrary. Since evolution so slowly brought to being the framework of the world, we need not wonder that its work in man has been accomplished slowly and painfully, with many a lapse into barbarism. Not Christianity, but unregenerate humanity, is responsible for these oft-quoted cruelties. Has Mr Blatchford never read Carlyle's French Revolution? Of course, he has. He knows that democracy in that age was guilty of infernal and fiendish cruelty. But the blame must not be given to democracy; it belongs to humanity.

Next, it has to be remembered that in these dark days of persecution the state of the world outside the Church was corrupt almost beyond belief; that in every generation there was a leaven of true Christianity. The best men of all time since Christ have been made by His religion.

"I claim, also, that the improvement in the policy of Christians is not due to the teachings or the actions of the Church. It is due to the spread of freedom and enlightenment outside the Church."

Who are these men whose names "Nunquam" plays

"All the advances in knowledge, and all the improvements in the Christian religion due to scientists and sceptics!"

What an astounding statement!

"In no case has Christ, or His Church, contributed to our better understanding of the origin of the universe, or of man, or of the Scriptures."

I think the writer hardly means what he says. Here again, he has parted company with his teacher, for Haeckel acknowledges, "Heresy only became possible when the Reformation and the Renaissance had broken the power of the Papacy."

Almost without exception, the great names met in "Nunquam's" diatribes, the men whom he quotes, and to whom he attributes the world's advance in light and knowledge, were humble Christian believers. Let him rid his mind for ever of the baseless delusion that a scientist cannot be a Christian. Why, I am given to understand that one of the meetings in connection with the British Association is a meeting for prayer, and that it is attended by men whose names are a household word throughout civilization! But the position taken by "Nunquam" may perhaps be understood by this phrase, "Free-thinking clergymen and laymen." He seems to imagine that the man who, in any way, advances our knowledge must be claimed as a free-thinker. 'Free-thinking clergymen!' I presume that under this head would be classed the Rev Washington Gladden and Rev Rhondda Williams, both of whom have been quoted with approval in the pages of the "Clarion." They would indignantly repudiate the notion that they were ought but loyal to Christ or in harmony with His Church, as would all "free-thinking clergymen."

Here, then, are "Nunquam's" fundamental errors, the main ones. He argues concerning the perversions of religion, not religion itself; he does not argue from adopted standards; he does not keep to one point of view concerning any particular doctrine; he does not understand the meaning of Christian experience; he does not distinguish between the action of real and professed Christians; and he does not recognise that the great work of enlightenment in science as in religion is to be credited to Christian thinkers.

Now I want to answer

#### "NUNQUAM'S QUESTIONS.

I, too, advise all Clarionettes to put these questions to the clergy in their own neighbourhood; the clergy will be glad to see them, and to answer their questions:—

Do you believe that Christ was a God, and the Son of God; or that He was only a good man?

I believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, Himself "very God of very God." I do not think "Nunquam" will find much divergence of opinion upon that point.

Do you believe that God is a personality, who interferes in human affairs?

I believe that God is a person, and that He guides and over-rules all that happens. "Interferes" is no wise word to use, nor yet is it an accurate statement of God's manner of action.

**Do you believe in direct answer to prayer?**

Of course, I do. I know that God answers prayer. "Nunquam" says that many prayers cannot, in the nature of things, be answered; e.g., the Italians praying to be defended from the violence of Vesuvius. No one ever contested that. Prayer must be in harmony with God's will ere it can be considered, and one of its results is that it tends to bring man into harmony with God's will. The act of prayer, says "Nunquam," is emotional. There, again, he is not altogether accurate. And further, it is an appeal to all that is best in the man himself, but "such a habit must tend to weaken character." Here again, the facts are all against him. The habit of prayer has made men strong and calm and capable. Its result is the direct opposite of what Mr Blatchford imagines. We who have practised it KNOW, and all his words beat in vain upon the facts of our experience.

**Do you believe that Christ performed miracles?**

I believe not only that Christ performed miracles, but that He performs them still. Whenever a bad man is made good it is His doing.

**Do you believe in the resurrection of the body?**

I believe in the resurrection of the body; i.e., that our spirits will again be clothed in bodily form, recognisable to those who have known us.

**Do you believe in hell as a world, or place of punishment; or only as a state of mind?**

Concerning hell, I believe that it is a punishment, awful in its completeness, belonging to the hereafter, bestowed only upon those who deliberately and of set purpose reject the good.

**Do you believe in the Trinity?**

I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one God.

**Do you believe in the immaculate conception?**

No Protestant Christians believe in the immaculate conception of Mary, and not all Roman Catholic Christians.

**Do you believe in a devil?**

I believe that there is a fallen spirit of evil.

**Do you believe that the Bible contains the actual words of God, and nothing else?**

I believe that the Bible in an especial sense is the Word of God, by Him inspired for man's guidance and salvation and comfort; but I do not believe that its every word is divine. God inspires, man reports.

**Do you believe that man has been slowly evolved from lower forms of life; or that he was created by God in the likeness of His own image?**

I believe that man was by God created in His own image, and that the method of his creation was evolution. This is not an alternative, as "Nunquam" states it.

Do you believe in the fall of man as related in the Bible?

I believe that man's moral nature is warped by the Fall, so that in him there is a bias toward evil.

Do you believe that Christ died to save man from hell, or do you believe that He died to save man from sin?

I believe that Christ died to save men from sin. "Nunquam" is entirely mistaken when he says:—

"There are two Christian theories. The old one is that Christ saves man from a hell of everlasting fire; the new one is that Christ saves man from sin."

The first theory has never been held by any Church. Christ saves man from sin, and THEREFORE from doom. It may be that at one time undue emphasis was laid upon the secondary result of the Atonement.

Do you believe that only by a belief in Christ as the Son of God can any man escape hell? Or do you believe that only by faith in Christ can man be good?

I believe that by faith in Christ men are forgiven their sin and renewed in God's image; that His atonement is the ONLY ground of forgiveness; but I also believe that multitudes share the blessings brought near by Christ who do not acknowledge Him as Lord.

I believe all these things, having most carefully read "Nunquam's" articles. Nothing in them has so much as touched my belief, still less changed it. Slightly paraphrasing his own words I would say: If this confident and vigorous Agnostic gentleman imagines that he has overthrown religion, or weakened its adherents in a single article of their faith, there is a rude awakening in store for him. And I can assure him that that is a much more difficult affair than he appears to realise. "This boarding party from the 'Clarion'" will have to shout less and fight more before it avails anything.

I propose now to take, in turn, Mr Blatchford's ideas on free-will, evolution, the origins of Christianity, and the revelation of Jesus.

#### FREE-WILL.

First then, as to free-will. Again and again, the "Clarion" columns have shouted "Wolf! wolf! wolf!" until we are beginning to be in the condition of the folk in the old story who heard that cry so often that they came not when there was real need for help. I have often come out to see Mr Blatchford's wolf, but I have not yet caught a glimpse of the beast. It began with a story:—

"A few weeks since, our dog, who is of a very jealous nature, had bitten one of her little pups, and made its mouth bleed. I was angry, and called her "an unnatural brute." Then my daughter Dolly spoke. She said: 'Well, I know it's horrid dad; but poor Commie couldn't help it—she did not make herself.' Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings comes the theory of heredity and environment in a few soft words. The dog did not make herself. Who made her?" Following up the story come statements like these:

"And if God is our 'maker,' who but He is responsible for our make-up? And if he alone is responsible, how can man have sinned against God? And if the man never did, nor could, sin against God, what becomes of the doctrines of the fall and the atonement? What becomes of hell, and the inspiration of the Scriptures? And how much of the Christian religion, as taught in these catechisms, remains standing? My wolf has devoured them all, as the sun devours the darkness."

"I have never denied man's possession of a will. The question at issue is not the question of whether man possesses a will; it is the question of the origin of that will. My contention is that if God created that will God is responsible for the acts of that will."

"Remember, then that I do not say man has no will, but that he is not responsible for the acts of that will, and that if God created the will of man, then it is impossible for man to sin against God."

Such statements lack nothing in clearness or assurance. They show that Haeckel's teaching, "the human will has no more freedom than that of the higher animals," has been completely imbibed.

Let us see how Mr Blatchford illustrates his contention. His pages simply abound in illustration:—

"If God wills it so (seeing that He is all-powerful), He can, by an act of will, compel me to write like a Roman Catholic cardinal or a Calvinist divine. He can change my thought, my mind, my very nature. He can make me conscious of the truth without any laborious searching on my part. He can do it more easily than I can draw a breath. And I must understand, and I must obey."

That is, man would no longer be man, but a machine. I will take each illustration separately, and then deal with them as a whole:

"If the baby is born good, it is God who made him good; if he is born bad it is God who made him bad."

The baby is born neither good nor bad. It has only the possibilities of goodness and badness—of both—in it.

"At the moment of birth, man is as much the product of heredity—that is to say, of his ancestors—as gunpowder is a product of the mixing of saltpetre, sulphur, and charcoal."

"Man" is not born: the babe is born. The babe is not responsible, but the man is.

"If I build a house of sand it is a sin against me for the house to fall?"

Mr Blatchford gets wrong again and again in comparing things mental with things physical. But supposing Mr Blatchford builds two houses on similar foundation of similar material, and subjects them to similar tests. One of the houses falls, and the other stands, would he not think there was something wrong? Our contention is that of two men with similar temperament, equipment, and environment, one falls and one stands. The matter of human choice decides the issue.

"If I make an engine and a line of rails, and the engine runs off the rails, is that my fault, or the fault of the engine?"

Neither; it is the fault of the driving power—in this case, the human will.

"Our dog did not make herself. Man does not make himself."

Mr Blatchford does not see that his arguments go towards reducing man to the level of the brute creation. The difference here is that the dog has no hand in making himself, man has.

"Yet you would ask a clear-headed, logical-minded, thoughtful, and studious man to believe that God—who is 'all-powerful,' and 'all-merciful,' and 'all-wise'—made Adam weak, and Eve seductive, and the serpent subtle, and then let sin and death loose upon the world, because a sand castle was not a rock."

This is the veriest nonsense. It is about as far from a statement of Christian doctrine as anything well could be. God's omnipotence is not used to over-ride His wisdom. Adam was not the weakling Mr Blatchford pictures, nor Eve so seductive as he imagines. The statement of the Christian case must be scrupulously fair, if Mr Blatchford is to deserve an answer.

"If a man chooses, he chooses by means of that will. If he chooses badly he must have a bad will. And since God gave him a bad will, God cannot justly blame him for choosing badly."

What of the man who one day chooses rightly, the next wrongly? Man is for ever cancelling or confirming his own choice. Moral quality does not belong to the will. "Since God gave him a bad will!"

Here is the same mis-statement that occurs repeatedly, a statement neither sensible, logical, nor true. Mr Blatchford sums up in this sentence :

"If—if God is responsible for man's nature, God is responsible for man's acts, and man cannot sin against God," which is the very point to be proved.

Mr G. K. Chesterton, one of the most brilliant of our younger writers, has contributed to the "Commonwealth," the "Daily News," and the "Clarion" itself, a series of articles dealing, among other points in this controversy, especially with free-will, and though Mr Blatchford remains unconvinced, the honours are all with Mr Chesterton. Briefly these are the points made by Mr Chesterton. I quote them because the case cannot be better put.

Mr Blatchford, asking how man can sin against God, when God made man, is taking up a very old position. "It was such questions the wild-eyed barbarians asked of their first Prophet."

### WHAT GOD CAN DO.

Mr Chesterton states the problem in these words: "Clearly God can in the exercise of this omnipotence, give some part of Himself to his creatures, can give His strength to the bull or His beauty to the lily. Could God possibly, in the exercise of His omnipotence, give to one of His creatures some portion of that other quality of His, His originating power, His power of primal invention, this making things from nothing or Himself? If God can do all things, can He not make man free? Can he not give man the power to create actions as God creates stars? He can give His force, can He give a little of His Sovereignty? Can He, in short, create a kind of little God, an *imago dei*? If He cannot : if His omnipotence stops there; then certainly the truth is with the Calvinists, who say man cannot please God, and with Mr Blatchford, who says he cannot sin against God. But if His omnipotence includes creating a little god, then that little god, being free, can obviously sin against his Creator. That is the real problem : there are difficulties on both sides : there is mystery everywhere : there is paradox everywhere. Any man may quite fairly take either side: any man may quite fairly give the riddle up and say he knows nothing about it. But Mr Blatchford does not by any means give the riddle up, and say he knows nothing about it. He says he knows all about it. He declares categorically, as an absolute dogma, that man cannot sin against God, that is to say that God cannot create a being with the power of sinning against him. He knows what God can do and cannot do. But he seems to think extraordinarily lightly of the task he has undertaken. Let me sum it up for him briefly and precisely. In order to maintain his philosophical position it is his business to prove, step by step,

the following proposition. That there is a certain limit to the omnipotence of the Inscrutable. That this limit is that He cannot make, by any mystical act whatever, a being having some of His creative powers and responsibility. Until Mr Blatchford has proved that, he has not opened the controversy. When he has proved that I will forgive his theological dogmatism for the sake of his theological subtlety, and give him the place he aspires to between Aquinas and Calvin."

Mr Blatchford declined to argue any such thing. Instead, he uses illustrations of cannons and what not, and draws from Mr Chesterton the remark that "he (Nunquam) has never troubled about the fact that the word has a meaning, or perhaps several meanings. The consequence has been that he has confused different things quite hopelessly. For instance, he has confused the ordinary use of 'will' with the philosophical use of it. He talks about a 'weak will.' But the philosophic argument has never had anything to do with strong wills or weak wills, it has always been concerned with whether anyone had a will of any sort. . . . If the martyr has free will, the drunkard has free-will: if the drunkard is a machine, the martyr is a machine."

"God may have, for all I know, made different limits to their wills; may have made it possible to one to will things which the other cannot will. In that case, of course, it would be unjust to ask of the second as much as of the first; but if the second has the power of willing some things, however few, he is responsible for willing those things. . . . Of course, he was not responsible for the will or for the character of the will. But he was responsible for the use of it up to its own limits, or it was not a will at all."

To this, Mr Blatchford replies:

"The will is the balance between two desires. There is no other way. Hence my allusions to weak and to strong wills are quite sound. The word 'will' is merely a symbol. There is no such thing as a special faculty of will. 'Will' is a word by which we signify the act of choice. And the act of choice is regulated by the faculties of the mind. And the faculties of the mind are made by God. Talk about 'playing the fool with words.' What can we call this doctrine that the will is free? God is all-powerful, God is good, God is love. God makes a man, and gives him a 'will' to choose. God, being omniscient, knows that the man will choose wrongly. God will punish the man for doing what he has made him to do. Why does not God, who is all-powerful, make man in such wise that he will do right?"

(I may interpolate that here again Mr Blatchford suffers from confusion of thought. No special faculty of will! That is un-

proved assertion. God does not know that man will choose wrongly. What God knows is that no man need choose wrongly.)

If that be so, responds Mr Chesterton, if man is not responsible for his acts, he must neither be praised, nor blamed, rewarded, nor punished. That is to say, that in destroying free-will Mr Blatchford destroys responsibility and uproots society. Mr Blatchford is now in a corner. In answer to the Rev. Ambrose Pope, he has acknowledged that man sins against his fellow-man, though he cannot sin against God. That statement has to be withdrawn. Man cannot sin at all, either against God or his fellow! And yet "don't write and tell me that if man is not responsible for his acts there is an end to all virtue and progress!"

The controversy is carried a step further when Mr Chesterton replies: "You are trying to set the whole world against Christianity on a point which Christianity has in common with the whole world. If I said: 'Jones's appearance is repulsive; between his eyes (it is unpleasant to speak of such things) there is a projection of flesh and gristle—' you would interrupt, 'If you only mean he has a nose, so has everyone. Disapprove of noses by all means, but in that case disapprove of mankind.' So I say to you. You make a special onslaught on a special theology. After much discussion it is made clear that you object to it because it blamed a man for his acts. That is, because it did what every human being has done morning, noon, and night from the beginning of the world. You talk as if you were amputating a malignant growth when you are only cutting off your nose to spite your face."

So now Mr Blatchford is driven to say that men are punished not for their SINS, but for their CRIMES, and that he does not denounce MEN, he only denounces ACTS. If that be so, it is a new habit. I seem, within quite recent days, to remember having read denunciations of Lord Penrhyn in the "Clarion."

Mr Chesterton is well entitled to say: "Mr Blatchford carries the argument up to the point he likes, and leaves off when he likes. He adopts an argument which, properly pursued, involves the idea that man, having had his whole nature planned out for him, cannot sin in any particular. It suits Mr Blatchford's general attitude to say that Adam, a dim figure in primeval scriptures, cannot sin against God. It does not suit his attitude at all to admit that Lord Penrhyn cannot sin against his workmen. Therefore he says that man can sin against the one and not the other; and every step he takes plunges him deeper and deeper into absurdity, until he has to imagine either that machines can be wicked or that landlords cannot, until he is not quite sure whether Lord Penrhyn is an innocent freebooter or a sinful sewing-machine."

All I have to say is that the "Clarion" will be very tame reading in future if Mr Blatchford acts upon his new theory.

We know that the babe comes into the world without self-consciousness, and therefore without will. Gradually with dawning life comes the strengthening of will; the babe gives place to the child, the child is confronted with freedom of choice: it can choose the good, it can choose the bad; sometimes it chooses the one, sometimes the other; it takes a hand in the making of its own nature. By the time manhood is reached, the nature possessed is not in its entirety derived from ancestors nor created by surroundings; it is the deliberate creation of man's own will. That is our position. Only on that hypothesis can progress be made. And in denying that Mr Blatchford denies the very possibility of the triumph of Socialism. May not the deep, wide hole "Nunquam" seen in the philosophy of others be really in his own? Suppose I put it in this way. Since Mr Blatchford founded the "Clarion," he is responsible for every opinion that has ever been expressed in the pages of the "Clarion." There is just as much logic, and just as much sense, and just as much truth in that assertion as in this:

"Since God is responsible for man's existence, he is responsible for all his acts."

On the subject of Free-will, the general verdict against Mr Blatchford must be "not proven."

#### EVOLUTION.

Not many words are needed on the subject of evolution. Mr Blatchford says:—

"I cannot believe that any man of ordinary intelligence who comes to the task with an open mind, can possibly resist the conviction that the weight of the evidence is enough to put the case for evolution beyond question."

That sentence implies that if once evolution be proved, Christianity will pass away. Our position is that evolution is not antagonistic to the faith. Mr Blatchford was recommended to read: "The Ascent through Christ," by Griffith Jones (Hodder & Stoughton). I don't suppose he has done so. The pity of it is that he still knows nothing of the complete Christian argument. But the book is well worth reading. It is "a study of the doctrine of redemption in the light of the theory of evolution," a profound and serious study. Mr Blatchford also implies that Haeckel's use of the theory of evolution is the only one allowable from the standpoint of modern science, which, of course, is very wide of the mark. He asks why, if the Churches accept the theory of evolution, they keep carping at it as unproven? Simply because it is unproven. God made man. That is our statement of fact. The probability is that He made man by the method of evolution. We KNOW that man is God's handiwork: we THINK the work was wrought after a certain fashion. We believe in creation not "by fiat," but "by process." "The essence of the difference between the older and the newer

doctrine," says Dr Martineau, in "The Seat of Authority in Religion," "lies in this: that the casualty which the former concentrates, the latter distributes: the fiat of a moment bursts open and spreads itself along the path of perpetuity."

"Nunquam" says that

"Evolution destroys the doctrine of the fall; for the fall pre-supposes that man was made perfect, and fell into sin."

Another mis statement. The fall pre-supposes that man was made INNOCENT, not PERFECT. Our ideas of Adam are gathered more largely from Milton than from the Bible. In the sacred records, Adam is simply a child, primitive man. Perfection is not assigned to him. That is the child of strugge, the outcome of temptation met and overcome.

Between theology and evolution there is no conflict. Theology says "Man is a fallen creature." Science says he is the victim of arrested development, of "retrogressive moral forces," which is another way of stating the same fact. Says Mr Griffith Jones: "The view most consistent with the teachings of Christian theology, as well as the facts and deductions of evolutionary science, is that man manifests all the INSTINCTS and ATTITUDES of a developing life, morally as well as mentally, but that these are held in check by a deep-rooted poison that has mingled with the very springs of life."

#### GOD: CREATOR AND FATHER.

Turning now to the revelation of God given in His Word, "Nunquam" asks—or rather he asserts, for he is far beyond the need of seeking information; but since he may be wrong, it is better to throw the problem into the form of a question—first:

"Is God, the Creator of the universe, likely to be the God of the Old Testament?"

and, second—

"Is the Bible revelation such an one as God would be likely to give?"

I do not recognise the picture given of "Jehovah, the Adopted Heavenly Father of Christianity," as being taken from the pages of Scripture. It is a caricature, not a likeness.

"The Christian God is not THE God. He is a God made by man. He is not wise, he is not just, he is not worthy of our praise. He does not deserve our love. To call Him 'our heavenly Father' is to call Him out of His name. He is not a God of love. He is not as just as any English judge. He is not as merciful as any earthly king. He is not as tender as any ordinary human father. He is not a God at all. He has no existence. He is a bad dream."

To prove this, we are given an account of the wonders of the starry sky, and told that if there be a Creator of these, He is not likely to have been "the kind of Creator to make blunders and commit crimes," to get "angry with men, and threaten them with scabs and sores, and plagues of lice and frogs." Mr B'atchford therefore proceeds to show that Jehovah did make blunders and commit crimes, according to the testimony of the Old Testament. Of course, he begins by mis-stating the case. He has most faithfully followed Haeckel in that bad practice.

"The universe, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, consists of a flat immovable earth, covered by a solid dome of sky, in which are set a small sun and moon, and a sprinkling of stars, all of which were created to give light to man."

Will Mr Blatchford tell me where, in the Bible, he read that the earth was flat, or where he read that it was immovable? The universe, as revealed in the Scriptures, consists of "the heavens, the earth, and all that in them is," and outside that realm science has discovered nothing, nor can do.

I notice that Mr Alfred Russel Wallace has just published a book—which I have had as yet no opportunity to read—entitled "Man's Place in the Universe." It claims that we have at length discovered the boundaries of existence. According to this theory, we now know how far the stellar universe extends, and beyond it is nothing but space. Approximately, the old idea is now seen to be true; our earth is at the very centre of the system. It may well be that in the end science will amply confirm revelation.

It is impossible in this address, to enter upon a detailed examination of the instances by which Mr Blatchford attempts to prove "the bad temper," "the immorality," "the cruelty, savagery, and mercilessness of Jehovah"—one must suffice as an illustration. The following words are plucked out of the heart of the story told in II. Chronicles, ch. 18:—

"And the Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab, king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner.

"Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith?

"And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so."

Briefly, the story is that the King of Israel invited the King of Judah to join him in a campaign. Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, who was on a visit to Ahab, hesitated, and suggested that the prophets should be applied to for guidance. They said "Go!" but still he hesitated, and asked for further guidance. At last, very re-

luctantly, they sent for a true prophet of God, and he predicted failure. Asked to account for the contrast between his advice and that of the other prophets, he used the words quoted by "Nunquam." They were his pictorial way of saying that these professed servants of the Lord were lying. That a prophet living in a dissolute age so mis-conceived God as to suggest that He makes men lie, only shows against what terrible odds the true conception of God has had to fight its way. That, however, is not THE note of the Old Testament. "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts." There is its message.

No one questions the statement that there are things in the Bible contrary to the spirit of God. All that is written there has not the force of a divine revelation. Many things are reported only to be condemned, quoted as lurid warnings. Even the devil is permitted to have his say, but what he says is not divine revelation; and what Micaiah said is not divine revelation either. Mr Blatchford quotes from the Rev T. Rhondda Williams: "Shall we understand the Bible?" and heartily recommend it. Mr Williams exposes all the mis-conceptions of God the book contains, and shows how still the fact of God abides. Other quotations are from Washington G'adden's book, "Who wrote the Bible?" and the author of that book concludes: "No man wisely opens the book who does not first lift up his heart for help to find in it the way of life, and to him who studies it in this spirit will it show the salvation of God." What, if, in the beginning the Jews thought of God just what the Moabites thought of Chemosh, or the Assyrians of Assur? The point is that they outgrew that thought, while the other Semitic nations did not. And that the Jewish thought of God was purified, clarified, and enlarged is the claim, the teaching, and the outcome of the Old Testament. A tribal God, Jehovah may have been in the beginning; but they came to know that He watched not over His people Israel alone, but over all the peoples of the earth. It is perhaps worth while to remark that Blatchford forsakes Haeckel here. Haeckel's argument demands the statement that the earlier religion of the Jews was the purest.

### REVELATION.

Coming to the general question of revelation, Mr Blatchford objects that the Bible does not reveal new moral truth, that it contains errors of fact, that is not explicit, nor final, nor yet known to all men. With the question of the originality of Bible teaching I will deal shortly. The claim that revelation should be perfect from the first sounds strange from the lips of a professed believer in evolution. That the Bible, being the work of human hands, is imperfect, must be acknowledged. I find myself, in the main, in accord with Mr Blatchford's quotations from

Washington Gladden, Dr. Aked, Rhondda Williams, and Dennis Farrar, but they would resent equally with me this sentence:

"Until quite recently, the Christians claimed that their religion was a direct revelation from God, and that the Bible was inspired by God, and I think I am right in saying that the majority of Christians claim this still."

Of course, they claim that still; ALL of them. The idea of progression in revelation does not deny revelation. Man's idea of God must be conditioned by his capacity. As man develops he knows God better. And so we find throughout the Old Testament a revelation that is progressive, a revelation not superseded by the New Testament, but enlarged and clarified. Revelation says Mr Blatchford must be universal, complete, perfect, final. Why so? In the nature of things, it is impossible, as impossible as that Mr Blatchford should make his daughter Dolly comprehend the completeness of his own Socialistic creed. The limitation is on the side of man, not on the side of God.

It is altogether unfair, too, to pick out from the Old Testament words and acts that conflict with our modern ideas of science and morality, and write as though these were the whole, or even as though they were representative of the whole. It is not accurate to say that those things are described "without disapproval," not true to the whole spirit of the Bible revelation. I say that not the passages he quotes, but passages such as these represent the teaching of the Old Testament:—

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

"Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

"Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

"The Lord executeth righteous acts, and judgments for all that are oppressed.

"He made known His ways unto Moses, His doings unto the children of Israel.

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

"He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us after our iniquities.

"For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear Him.

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.

"Like as a father pitith his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear Him.

"For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.

"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishest

"For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children;

"To such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His precepts to do them."

Says Blatchford:—

"Tom Paine left Moses and Isaiah centuries behind when he wrote: 'The world is my country: to do good my religion.'"

Indeed! It is perhaps as well to remember that Tom Paine was the happy possessor of the good all the intervening centuries had garnered, good springing out of the teachings of Moses and Isaiah. But listen: "The eternal God is thy dwelling-place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

### THE VALUE OF THE BIBLE.

The question of the worth of the Bible is not to be settled by "Nunquam's" miscellaneous hotchpotch, but by the influence of the whole book. "Only the other day, says he—

"It was announced that the Bible Society wanted a quarter of a million to buy Bibles to send to 'the heathen.' In these Bibles all the old errors, all the old savagery, all the old immorality, all the old indecency will be printed without a word of denial or of explanation, and will be sold as part of the divine revelation of God.'

The Bible Society is just celebrating its centenary, and speaking at one of its meetings the Rev G. H. Bondfield, one of the London Missionary Society's agents in China, related the following incident:—"A colporteur going through Chih Kiang Province sold the four Gospels to a woman who was standing on a doorstep, and then passed on and, I suppose, forgot all about it. When the woman's husband came in he put them away unopened. Later on he thought that they might contain some kind of Western learning that would be useful in the school which he proposed to open. Down came those

four Gospels; but instead of finding the things he wanted to find about Western education and Western science he found something else, and this something else laid hold upon his heart and his imagination, and after he had read the books himself, he read them over to the members of his household, and then they said: 'This God is not like our gods. We had better worship Him.' So they stopped their old forms of worship, and they said: 'How shall we worship this God?' They searched the Gospels again, and found the verse which says 'God is a Spirit;' and so they said, 'We will make no idol, we will have no shrine, we will erect no temple;' but every morning when the door was opened the old gentleman went out and knelt on the flag-stones, and bowed his head on the ground and said, 'O God, we truly worship Thee.' And he went on in this way for five years. It was primitive patriarchal worship, almost like Abraham or Jacob may have worshipped on the plain. Then God led an evangelist to that village, and he discovered this Christian family, and was amazed at the knowledge which this old gentleman and at least two other members of his household displayed of the Gospel, and of the essential facts of our Christian faith. There is the beginning of another Church in that province through the word of God."

That is our case; when the Bible is read with an honest mind and an anxious heart it reveals God. This also we know.

Says "Nunquam":—

"If anyone asked me what evidence exists in support of 'he claims that the Bible is the Word of God, or that it was in any real sense of the words 'divinely inspired,' I should answer without the least hesitation, that there does not exist a scrap of evidence of any kind in support of such a claim."

You see how infallible he is! But I would reply in words that Cromwell is reported to have used to the Scottish Parliament: "I beseech you, brethren, in the bowels of Christ, to believe that you may be much mistaken."

Mr Ballard, in the "British Weekly," quoted the opinion held by many on the Bible. In his reply "Nunquam" entirely misrepresents the position of his antagonist. These testimonies to the Bible are quoted to show that the men who uttered them were conscious of its influence upon their own heart and life, an influence that has been wholly for good. And it is no answer to say that this is "gush." Much of the "Clarion" articles on religion are "gush." Nor is the case altered by "Nunquam" saying that his quotations were from the Old Testament. That is part of the Bible; Mr Blatchford's effort is not to wipe out the Old Testament, but to wipe out the Bible:—

"For instance, I claim that Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Jacob, Lot, David, and Solomon were immoral men and cruel savages. Can anyone deny it?"

We do deny it. We say there is no foundation for it. It is a baseless slander. Mr Blatchford says the Bible is not inspired. He denies its validity and its worth. Very well, then the appeal must be to experience. I also shall quote a few opinions.

The opinion of Sir Edwin Arnold should have especial value, since he is the man who has done more to popularise Buddha than any other. His "Light of Asia" is known far and wide. "Nunquam" has a great opinion of Buddha. In this matter also he has faithfully followed the example of Haeckel. Now, Sir Edwin Arnold knows more about Buddha than does the Editor of the "Clarion." That he is not prejudiced against Buddhism his work shows. He also knows the Bible, perhaps even as well as Mr Blatchford. Yet Sir Edwin Arnold says: "You ask me to respond to the query, 'What I owe to the Bible?' My short reply would be, 'Everything'; my longer reply, to be sufficiently serious and comprehensive, would run to reams of paper. But if, as I suppose, I am addressed as a man of letters—I will simply say that I owe my education, as a writer, more to the Bible than to any other hundred books that could be named. It is, together with the Classics, and our book of Common Prayer, the grandest possible school of style, letting alone all that it must ever be on the moral and spiritual side."

Goethe is a favourite with Haeckel, if not with Blatchford, and he says: "I am convinced that the Bible becomes even more beautiful the more one understands it; that is, the more one gets insight to see that every word which we take generally and make special application of to our own wants, has had, in connection with certain circumstances, with certain relations of time and place, a particular, directly individual reference of its own."

Robert Louis Stevenson was not given to "gush." Take his testimony:—"Written in the East, these characters live for ever in the West; written in one province, they pervade the world; penned in rude times, they are prized more and more as civilization advances; product of antiquity, they come home to the business and bosoms of men, women, and children in modern days. Then is it any exaggeration to say that the 'characters of Scripture are a marvel of the mind'?"

Matthew Arnold is quoted with approval by Blatchford. One of his books is re-published as part of the epidemic of sixpenny rationalism. What he would have said of the company in which he finds himself would be worth hearing. Matthew Arnold, concerning the Old Testament and its influence, says: "God was to Israel neither an assumption nor a metaphysical idea. He was the power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. Why should we study the Bible? Why will not other books do as well? Why? Because this power is revealed in Israel and the Bible, and not by other

teachers and books! That is, there is infinitely more of this there, He is plainer and easier to come at, and incomparably more impressive."

More quotation is unnecessary, but it might be continued endlessly. "I admit the superiority of Ruskin and of Carlyle," says Blatchford, but concerning the Bible

"I say most emphatically that these great men were mistaken. I appeal against their judgment. How can the case be tried? It can be tried very simply. It can be tried by reading the Bible."

It is a pleasure to find myself in agreement with "Nunquam" on one point. If the outcome of his articles is that men take his advice, and READ THE BIBLE, we shall have much to be thankful for. Read the Bible, all of it, often, and it will speak for itself.

Dealing next with

### THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY,

I want to remark on the poverty of Mr Blatchford's "authorities." It would be interesting to hear the opinions of Huxley or Matthew Arnold, were they still alive, on their association in this Rationalist crusade with Grant Allen, J. M. Robertson, J. W. Parsons, and their like. Professor Orr relates how Samuel Laing, whose book is amongst those advertised in and recommended by the "Clarion," drew up, on one occasion, a short negative creed of eight propositions embodying the new scientific faith, on which performance Huxley cruelly remarked, "I speak only for myself, and do not dream of anathematising and excommunicating Mr Laing; but when I consider his creed, and compare it with the Athanasian, I think I have, on the whole, a clearer conception of the latter!" Let Mr Blatchford consult books that count, and authorities that are authorities in his endeavour to learn something of the Christian religion.

The way in which "Nunquam" treats the historical value of the Gospels may be disposed of by one concrete illustration. In his attempt to show that they are not authentic, but on the contrary are full of "fraud and forgery and deceit," he gives just one illustration from Romans iii., 7: "But if the truth of God through my lie abounded unto His glory, why am I also still judged a sinner?" and leaves his readers to assume that the apostle Paul advocates doing evil that good may come. It is incredible to think that Mr Blatchford has not read the context, that he does not know that Paul is arguing with a Rabbinical disputant, and controverting his position. The question is only put into the mouth of his opponent that it may be disowned, and in the very next verse Paul declares such an attitude to be a slander upon religion. Mr Blatchford knows this. He says the verse may be interpreted in more than

one way, but with cool effrontery tells us the early Christians took the words "as a warranty that it was right to lie for the glory of God." That is not true. Statements of such a kind—assertions without proof, without likelihood of proof, without the possibility of proof, abound in these articles. As Mr Blatchford acknowledges, there is an immense body of literature concerning the New Testament Scriptures. And we contend that criticism has firmly established their claim to credence. From their pages the Christ stands forth, radiant and supreme.

### HOW TO ACCOUNT FOR CHRIST.

No evidence that Christ ever lived apart from the New Testament! It is an amazing statement. Had Mr Blatchford said there was no evidence that King Asoka, or Buddhist tradition, had ever lived, one might have listened to him. Mind you, I do not make that claim. I am only pointing out that Mr Blatchford seizes hold here and there of a name far more distant and legendary than the names of the New Testament. He cannot so easily bot out Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul from the page of history. Blatchford will not succeed where Strauss failed.

"That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,  
Or decomposes but to re-compose,  
Become my universe that feels and knows."

If Christ never lived, how are we to account for the picture of Him in the Gospels, or for the Christian Church? Listen to John Stuart Mill: "It is no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of His followers. Who among His disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee—still less the early Christian writers."

Rousseau, again no friend of the Christian religion, declares that the inventor of such a Being would be a more astonishing character than the hero. No, Jesus was and is. Nineteen centuries leave Him still the central figure in the world's life.

Though there have been Pagan Christs many; though more than one man has claimed a virgin birth; though a cannibal tribe has the sacramental notion of drinking the blood of God, these things but serve to show that out of the more excellent glory the Voice has spoken: "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him."

The historic Christ abides, that Jesus was is patent and sure; but it is even more to the point that this same Jesus is in the inner realm of conscience the final authority. Of none other is this true.

## WAS JESUS ORIGINAL?

I have not time to follow Mr Blatchford, as he follows Parsons, Robertson, and Grant Allen through all the pre-Christian myths. Even if all that they say be true, and that is very far from being the case, the divinity of Christianity is not disposed of. The study of comparative religion has clearly shown that the ethical teaching of Jesus was anticipated in many lands and by many men. That might well be. For He was "the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world."

Mr Blatchford has given us these quotations. I need not repeat them. But I must say that they are the tit-bits of non-Christian teaching, jewels found in a muck-heap, by no means representative of the teaching of the sacred books of the East. Professor Max Muller acknowledges that in editing the series he was compelled to exclude certain portions, because they were too shameful to bear publication: they would have ensured his prosecution for circulating immoral literature. Mr Blatchford has not told his readers that. All religions have gleams of truth, but none of them can for one moment bear comparison with the Christian religion when their teaching is considered as a whole. That is practically acknowledged with the one exception of Buddhism, to which I will refer in a moment.

Is it necessary that the teaching of Jesus should be new? He Himself did not think so. He came not "to destroy the law and the prophets," whether they be Judæan or Buddhist, but to fulfil them, to draw out their hidden meaning, and make effectual their divine claim. We do not deny that the sea which laves our shores may spark'e with phosphorescence when ploughed by the keel of the vessel, but, for all that, we seek light from the sun. Nor do we deny that Socrates and Plato, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, Confucius and Zoroaster, Buddha and Mahomet, all flash light upon human life. Yet do they come short of the spiritual vision even of the Old Testament, while they fade into insignificance before the noon-tide blaze that comes with Jesus. As light was centralised for our system in the sun, Christ gathered all light into His central fulness, and now it radiates from Him to warm and cleanse humanity. Whittier has put it with simplicity and grace in his poem, "Miriam":—

"We search the world for truth; we cull  
The good, the pure, the beautiful;  
And, weary seekers of the best,  
We come back laden from our quest,  
To find that all the sages said  
Is in the Book our mothers read,  
And all our treasures of old thought  
In His harmonious fulness wrought,

Who gathers in one sheaf complete  
 The scattered blades of God's own wheat,  
 The common growth that maketh good  
 His all-embracing Fatherhood."

The teaching of Jesus is instinct with spirituality, as is none other. He universalises moral law. He embodies His ethics in His own character. He presents man in his true relation towards God. He shows how sin may be overcome. I may not vindicate this claim in detail now, but I would like, in all earnestness, to recommend a book written by R. E. Welsh, entit'led, "In Relief of Doubt," and published by James Bowden (1/11 net), where the subject is treated fully, and, to my mind, convincingly.

The words of Christ are operative. That cannot be said even of Buddha.

### THE FRUITS OF BUDDHISM.

From the Bible Society's magazine I take the following :—

"Extract from 'Bukhyo,' a Buddhist magazine published in Japan, and quoted in the 'Japan Mail,' 1899 :—'The use which the ordinary Buddhist makes of his sacred Scriptures is something entirely different from that of the Christian. The latter reads, and derives comfort and instruction from his Bible on all occasions. As he sits by his fire-box, or lies on his pallet, in times of joy and sorrow, the earnest Christian may be seen poring over the sacred page. What he reads he seeks to understand and to apply. But the Buddhist uses his sacred book as a charm only. He does not seek to understand it. He says he is conscious of being blessed, he does not know how, as he listens to the reading of his Scriptures. This savours of magic, and is quite beneath the intelligent appreciation of Biblical teaching, found amongst devout Christians.'"

Or, take this testimony, still more recent, from a leading Hindu newspaper :—

"We by no means approve of the attempts of the Evangelists to Christianise India. We believe in the vitality of the Hindu religion, and in the suitability of its doctrines to the people of this land, if not to those of other lands. But it is impossible not to admire, and to feel thankful for the good work the missionaries are doing. It is a matter of standing reproach to us that we are not able to do for our own countrymen and women half as much as the Christian missionaries are doing for us. Where are the hospitals for Hindu ladies, founded by the Hindu religious organisations? Where are the Hindu women who, influenced by their religion, are willing to devote their lives to the service of their sisters? Let us be thankful that women born in England, whose customs, manners, and everyday life, differ vastly from our own, cheerfully sojourn amidst us and spend years, not in assisting their own kith-

and kin, not in making money, but in teaching all classes of Hindu women, in nursing them when they are ill. Let anyone who is sceptical only visit the scenes of work of these ladies, and they will be satisfied with the highly disinterested nature of the work that is being done."

Will Mr Blatchford tell us why in India, the home of Buddhism (I am speaking not of what is written in its books, but of the practical outcome of that form of religion), has degraded woman until she has become a chattel, jealously secluded from the world without, a child in mind and an impediment to all progress? Will he defend the system of child marriage and of suttee, that awful system, swept away by the Christian Government, which demanded the immolation of the widow upon the funeral pyre of her husband? Will he explain away the system that sells children into slavery and prostitution? Mr Blatchford may say that Buddhism has lost its power in India, and that the condition of that land is not to be charged against it. Then I point to Thibet, where Buddhism is still a power. Will Mr Blatchford explain the cruelties perpetrated in that land? Will he tell us why suffering all through the East makes no appeal to human sympathy? I know that Buddhism teaches compassion, but I know, too, that Buddhists do not practise compassion. Buddhism never built a hospital; never opened a school for the blind; never cared for the leper or the outcast. Will Mr Blatchford tell us why in Buddhist lands the saint is the man who never works, and holiness is another term for idleness? The fact is that Buddhism, best of the non-Christian faiths, is sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, a broken reed for helpless humanity to lean upon. Mr Blatchford's claim for it simply cannot be substantiated.

But Jesus Christ!

### OUR CLAIM FOR CHRIST.

No one makes the claim He makes. Deliberately He claims for for Himself all races, all generations, all conditions of men. No religion, save Christianity, so much as endeavours to save the world. But nothing less will content Him.

No incarnation is like His. Let Mr Blatchford parallel this thought from any religion. It is nothing to the point to say that mythology is full of instances of gods coming down amongst men, and also of HEROES declared to be born of virgins. That is his customary habit of confounding things that differ. Let him print for us any story like the sweet story of the Gospel concerning the Incarnation, that has in any way touched men's hearts or influenced their lives. He cannot do it.

No life is like His. Mr Blatchford has persistently ignored the discord in human nature which we know as sin. Though he declines

to call it sin, it is still there, and must be reckoned with. Our claim is that Christ, and Christ alone has dealt with that. I shall close shortly by emphasising this fact. Buddha, that man of sorrows too, has no message by which man may conquer sin. Nor has Blatchford. But Jesus has. The central message of the new Testament has never so much as been once mentioned during all these articles. This is the Word that stands unmatched in its divine power and blessing—

“God so LOVED THE WORLD that He gave His only begotten Son,  
That whosoever believeth in Him  
Should not perish, but have everlasting life.

And, once more, no resurrection is like His. I am bound to say that “Nunquam’s” treatment of this question, which he himself tells us is “the central truth of the Christian religion” is childishly superficial. He tells us that there are “millions of men and women known to have strong motives—sentimental, political, or mercenary—for proving the verity of the resurrection.” There are now. But then, not a single man or woman stood to gain anything by asserting the resurrection. Think of Paul, the Apostle! The knout with which they scourged him, those stonings and shipwrecks, that ignominy and imprisonment; these, and worse than these, he gladly bore—for what? Where came the gain? I know what he lost,—position and power, wealth and influence. All that men count dear. But the gain! The fact is, no living man stood to gain anything, politically, financially, or sentimentally, by inventing the story of the resurrection. The theory Mr Blatchford finally adopts has been long since disproved. The wildest amongst rationalist critics find it impossible to believe that Jesus merely swooned. I cannot argue the question now, and really it is not necessary. Mr Ballard, in his “Miracles of Unbelief,” well sums up the case: “We are warranted in the conclusion that if the Christian account of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ involves solemn mystery, the un-Christian involves blank impossibility. The miracles of faith are credible and justifiable. The miracles of unbelief are incredible monstrosities. Between these two, for every reasonable mind the choice is plain.”

How absurd it is to shut us up to the New Testament for evidence! That is as illogical as to demand that one should explain the British Empire, and never refer to anything outside these Islands. What of the Christian Church? Is she no witness to Christ, in her persistence through the ages; ay, and in her power to-day, a power greater than that of any State the world over? What of Christian Missions? The world can show nothing worthy of comparison with the heroism and sacrifice of these sons and daughters of God, who have gone forth “for His name’s sake.” What of Christian philanthropies? Let “Nunquam” meander as he may, they all owe their origin to, and derive their inspiration

from, the Christian religion. Religion turns men's thoughts from the slums to the skies. Never! Why, the social agencies and humanitarian works of the Manchester Mission alone are greater, more varied, and more successful than the combined humanitarian agencies of Socialism throughout the entire country.

To say that altruism can be found amongst men of all religions or of none is to evade the point. The point is that altruism is only produced by a Christian civilisation.\*

James Russell Lowell's criticism on men who talk as though they owed nothing to Christianity has often been quoted. Says he:

"I fear that when we indulge ourselves in the amusement of going without a religion, we are not, perhaps, aware how much we are sustained by an enormous mass of Christian feeling and religious conviction, so that, whatever it may be safe for us to think, for us who have had great advantages, and have been brought up in such a way that a certain moral direction has been given to our character, I do not know what would become of the less favoured classes of mankind, if they undertook to play the same game."

Any Christian system of religion, in spite of defects, is "infinitely preferable to any form of polite and polished scepticism, which gathers as its votaries the degenerate sons of heroic ancestors, who, having been trained in a society and educated in schools, the foundations of which were laid by men of faith and piety, now turn and kick down the ladder by which they have climbed up, and persuade men to live without God and leave them to die without hope. These men, indulging themselves in the amusement of going without a religion, may be thankful that they live in lands where the Gospel they neglect has tamed the beastliness and ferocity of the men who but for Christianity, might long ago have eaten their carcases like the South Sea Islanders, or cut off their heads and tanned their hides like the monsters of the French Revolution."

When the keen scrutiny of sceptics "has found a place on this planet, ten miles square, where a decent man can live in decency, comfort, and security, supporting and educating his children unspoiled and unpolluted, a place where age is reverenced, infancy respected, womanhood honoured, and human life held in due regard,—when sceptics can find such a place, ten miles square, on this globe, where the Gospel of Christ has not gone and cleared the way

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\* A letter in the "Clarion" for November 6th, asks for a poetical gem, or an ethical jewel, worthy of comparison with Psalm xxiii., taken from PAGAN seers, and "Nunquam" quotes from Longfellow's "Hiawatha," in reply! He gives up the claim that pagan literature can be equal to Christian literature; but still thinks that uninspired authors may equal or surpass the inspired writers of the Bible. That attitude, of course, ignores the fact that the writer whom he quotes has drawn his inspiration from the Bible.

and laid the foundations, and made decency and security possible, it will then be in order for the sceptical literati to move thither, and then ventilate their views. But so long as these men are very dependent on the religion which they discard for every privilege they enjoy, they may well hesitate a little before they seek to rob a Christian of his hope and humanity of its faith in that Saviour who alone has given to men that hope of eternal life which makes life tolerable and society possible, and robs death of its terrors and the grave of its gloom."

The fact is that Mr Blatchford has hastily read a number of books attacking the Christian faith, and has assumed that he already knew what could be written in its favour. The serious scholarly volumes that have, in all good faith, been written in defence of the Christian religion, he will not so much as examine. "Contempt before examination is proof against all argument." Nor will I e deal with the manifest facts that bring to nought all his reasoning. The Christian Church he wilfully mis-represents, being unable to explain her; the Christian type of character he denounces, being unable to appreciate it; the Christian experience he denies, being unable to understand it. But, for all that, these things cry aloud for explanation, as does one fact more, and with the mention of that I must conclude, the fact we call conversion.

### CONVERSION.

What is conversion but a miracle? You remember the story told in the Acts of the Apostles of a lame man who had received power to walk, and how the authorities of that time would have liked to deny the miracle, or minimise its importance. But they had to get over one great difficulty—the man was there—and, says the author, with scarcely veiled sarcasm, "Seeing the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it." That healed man is the unanswerable argument for Christianity. I can show Mr Blatchford scores of men in his own city, many of them victims of misfortune, many more soldiers of crime, but all of them men of wretched condition and surrounding, whose life has been radically changed by the acceptance of the Gospel of Jesus. Heredity and environment have been against these men, but Christ has made men of them. Philosophy can give men rules for good conduct, but only Jesus can make bad men good. The old refrain we sing is true yet—

"None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.

"A contented Pagan," to quote Mr Blatchford's own description of himself, may feel no need of Christ, nor of the support of religion. Says James Lane Allen, "It is the sorrowful and the old who lead the human host toward Paradise: youth and happiness loiter far behind, and are satisfied with the earth." But He who

preaches the Gospel to the poor waits also to be the inspiration of the young and the happy. And I, for one, having most earnestly read all that "Nunquam" has to say, can still affirm, "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." I can still take God's word, and sing—

"Should all the forms that men devise  
Assault my faith with treacherous art,  
I'd call them vanity and lies,  
And bind Thy Gospel to my heart."

